AMIGA FORMAT

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The best of the Amiga 1991
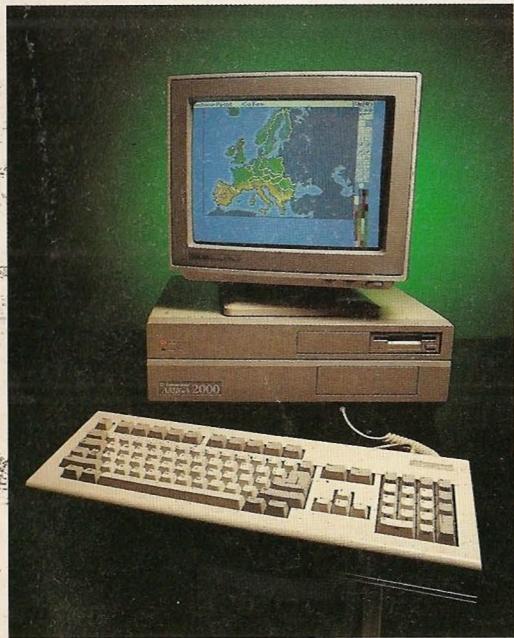
19 programs every Amiga owner should have!

19 painting, drawing and animation packages!

19 three-dimensional modelling programs!

91 other tricky buying decisions made easy!

That's a total of 148 non-games programs and packages that we've rated, recommended or rejected, all to help you make the right choice when it comes to laying out your cash!

What's it all about?

The original idea from which this booklet sprang was to give you a 'cut out and keep' guide in the pages of the magazine to the whole range of Amiga non-games software that is currently available. Instead, we've done the cutting out by making it a separate booklet, so all you need to do is the keeping!

There's not every last piece of Amiga software in here, but certainly the vast majority. The main exception is educational stuff. But it includes all the most commonly-available programs that are useful, productive, creative, or just plain fun. We've also included some combination software-and-hardware packages, most notably sound samplers and video digitisers, mainly because they are for creative use and so fit in here better than they would in a round-up, say, of disk drives and printers.

How to use this guide

The idea is to help you when you're looking through the adverts or browsing the shop shelves and trying to decide if a particular program would suit your needs, so take it with you when you're shopping for Amiga stuff. As well as the recommended price or a guide price for each item, we've also included a space for you to write in the best price you've seen for a particular item you want, or to make a note of any bargains you might have found, even if it wasn't something you were looking for.

We haven't attempted to describe in detail what each package does: that should be clear enough from the packaging or the description in a catalogue. Instead, we've just given our opinion on whether it is worth buying. And, of course, some things might be worth paying full whack for, while others might only be worth having if you pick them up cheap.

What we've also done is given each item a simple Star Rating, to give you an at-a-glance yes or no if you need to make a decision.

Star Ratings

☆☆☆☆☆	Outstanding: every Amiga owner should have it!
☆☆☆☆	Excellent: you should definitely consider it.
☆☆☆	Good: but with reservations. Shop for price.
☆☆	Adequate: it'll do the job, but get it cheap.
☆	Poor: pick it up only if it's at PD prices!

So, all that remains to be said is good luck and happy shopping!

GRAPHICS: PAINT AND ANIMATION

Deluxe Paint 2   £49   ☆☆
The second version of the most popular paint package is still widely available: it's good, but if you pick it up cheap find out about upgrading to *DPaint III* or *IV* by phoning Electronic Arts on 0753 546442.

### DPaint 3   £69   ☆☆☆☆
The third version of *DPaint* with its excellent animation facilities is still the standard paint package for anything except HAM mode. Again, you can upgrade to the latest version.
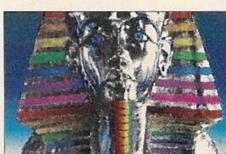
DPaint IV   £89   ☆☆☆☆☆
The very latest paint package - goes on sale September 1991. Adds 4096-colour HAM painting to the extremely popular *Deluxe Paint III*, but is unique among the paint programs in that it can work in any of the Amiga's graphics modes: four colours through 64 to HAM, low- to high-res, Interlace and all. Also has many excellent painting tools and comes with an animation sequencer to let you set up complex animations from short clips. Possibly the best Amiga program to date. It is very likely that no paint package will ever outdo it and it will become a standard.

Photon Paint 2   £79.95   ☆☆☆
One of the two slightly older HAM-only paint programs, it has many good features but is now superceded by both *DPaint IV* and *Spectracolor,* which is based on the same code. You might find that it is available cheaper soon.

DigiPaint 3   £75   ☆☆☆
The other of the slightly older HAM-only paint programs. Essentially very similar to *Photon Paint* but has some quirky bits as well as some excellent unique features, but overall is left behind by the two newer HAM packages.

Spectracolor   £??   ☆☆☆☆
Very excellent HAM paint and animation program, but unlike *Deluxe Paint IV* it is HAM-only. Its main unique feature (from *Photon Paint*) is the ability to wrap a brush onto a 'solid' shape with proper lighting. Good, but could suffer from *DPaint*'s dominance.

Express Paint   £N/A   ☆
A very old and very bizarre painting program that works in no more than 32 colours. It was left miles behind by *Deluxe Paint* years ago. It's really quite tricky to use and unfriendly, but if you can get it dirt cheap you will get some use from it.

Spritz   £45   ☆
Everything that goes for *Express Paint* goes for this one too, because it is actually more or less the same thing. We've seen this one on sale as cheap as £3, so it makes a really viable alternative to a Public Domain program.

Disney's The Animation Studio   £99.95   ☆☆☆☆
As you would expect from anything with Disney's name, this is very high-quality indeed. Designed especially for coloured-in line-drawings, so you'll need to be able to draw. 32-colour is not too limiting because each frame can have a separate palette.

Aegis Graphics Starter Kit   £N/A   ☆
A combination package of *Aegis Images* (a paint program), *Aegis Draw* (a structured drawing/CAD type program) and *Aegis Animator* (an animation creator). All are now extremely aged and completely outdated. OK if very cheap.

Fantavision £35 ☆☆

Old, difficult to get your head round at first but actually quite simple and unique. Creates simple animations by moving structured objects (outline drawings that you can reshape by dragging points around) over bitmap backgrounds. Worth a bash.

Zoetrope £89 ☆☆

Another very bizarre program, this is basically a paint and animation package that does all kinds of very clever and scientific things, but it's terribly complex and unfriendly. Get it if you're curious, but you're out on a limb!

The Graphics Workshop £N/A ☆☆☆☆

Only recent and only available on import from the US though it works on UK (PAL) Amigas, this is a very good 64-colour paint and animation package that could have been a rival for *DPaint III* if the stakes hadn't been upped to HAM. Might be reborn as a 24-bit system.

Icon Paint £N/A ☆☆

A very satisfactory program to make it easy for you to design and use colourful icons on your Workbench-booted programs. It is available at a ridiculously low price, so why not give it a whirl?

Deluxe Print 2 £35 ☆☆

Now included free with certain of the Amiga bundles you see advertised as well as the official Commodore version, this is basically a simple design system geared towards producing large print-outs like posters. Not too stunning.

Comic Setter £45 ☆☆☆

Basically a design program that lets you join together clip-art drawn in a comic-book style and type in the words to produce your own comic books. Rather fun, actually, though very computer-ish.

Movie Setter £49 ☆☆☆

Rather more to it than its sister program, this one is a full-blown animation creator: it doesn't paint, but stitches together bits from other programs. It's not state-of-the-art, but look at Eric Schwartz's PD animations to see its excellent results.

GRAPHICS: STRUCTURED DRAWING

Professional Draw 2 £115 ☆☆☆☆☆
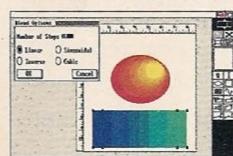
This is almost, but not quite, a unique program for the Amiga: and it is certainly unrivalled in its quality. The only shame is that you don't see more use made of it. It is a structured drawing program, which means that every line or point is stored in memory as 2D coordinates. The big advantage of structured drawing is twofold: one, that any line or object in the picture can be stretched, bent or reshaped at will any time: and two, that it will always print out at the highest possible quality, however big it is, which makes it great for DTP.

Design Works £100 ☆☆☆☆

A very new release, this is only the second structured drawing program to appear for the Amiga. It is by no means as powerful as *Professional Draw* but it will work on an unexpanded A500 and could be a good one for the less experienced hand.

GRAPHICS: IMAGE PROCESSING

Deluxe Video III £90 ☆☆

A very good animation sequencing system, for putting together shorter animation sections and elements into a full production. The only real doubt over it nowadays is that the most important part of the program is given away free with *Deluxe Paint IV*.

Deluxe Photolab   £65   ☆☆☆

This is not only a very powerful image-processing program, it also has all the features of a paint package and can work in what's called 'RGB' colour. Undoubtedly very useful, but does not seem to be in common use. Get it if you need the features.

Pixmate   £45   ☆☆☆

A straightforward image-processing program, particularly useful for converting HAM pictures to 32 colours or less. Lots of useful features for messing about with images. As with most of the programs in its class, useful if you need these features.

Butcher   £35   ☆☆☆

Provides many of the same features as *Pixmate* - it's the other standard way of knocking HAM images down to 32 colours - but older and more techie in feel. Still very useful for graphics enthusiasts to have, but not very widely available.

The Art Department   £50   ☆☆☆

First of the new generation of image-processing programs which can handle 24-bit IFFs and lots of file formats from other machines. The features are not as varied as earlier programs, but the functionality is much better. A true graphics tool.

Art Department Professional   £130   ☆☆☆☆☆

A very new and excellent image-processing program, which offers the two main features you would expect from any good image processor and two more besides. It can load and save in a wide range of different file formats, so it's ideal for transfers from other computer formats. It can do a lot to your image, either to improve it or make it interesting. Plus it converts all working data into 24-bit, so quality is maximised: and it can also produce composites of images. Very powerful, very easy to use: very good indeed.

Elan Performer   £50   ☆☆

A couple of years old now, this is a presentation producer: in other words, a kind of animation sequencer. It's easy to use and works by allowing you to assign images or animations to keys on the keyboard as you play them. But only if you can find a use.

Aegis Animagic   £80   ☆☆

A simple animation sequencing package which is really very easy to use. It allows you to load in animations and pictures and manipulate them, but it's really meant for splicing anims together. Against is that *DPaint IV* now does this too.

The Director   £60   ☆☆

Now very aged, this is another animation sequencing program intended to produce long animations from shorter ones. Although it is very popular in America it's not too commonly used here and the unfriendly script-only system makes it less accessible.

Photon Video: Cel Animator   £100   ☆☆

Created because *Photon Paint* couldn't do proper animations, this is more a line-testing system. You can draw as many frames as memory allows, viewing ten at once, then load them into Photon Paint to draw them up properly. Not so useful these days.

GRAPHICS: 3D MODELLING

Turbo Silver   £145   ☆☆☆

Very complex to use, but a very powerful ray-tracing system. Has now been updated to *Imagine* (see below) which may mean this is available cheaply, in which case anyone who can spare the time to learn it should give it a go. Results are quite excellent.

Imagine   £250   ☆☆☆☆☆

The newest of the ray-tracing packages, developed and improved from *Turbo Silver*. This is now almost certainly the best ray-tracing program on the Amiga and is capable of producing images in full 24-bit colour, so it's right up to date. Rendering is very fast for a program of the kind, and it looks as though this one could start to become the standard.

3D Professional   £200   ☆☆☆

The original version of this program has a number of problems which spoil an otherwise excellent product. Again this is a solid modelling system, so rendering is good: but there are problems with the modelling system. Look out for a new version soon.

Draw 4D   £100   ☆☆☆

This is a very unusual 3D modelling system, because it is designed with only one use in mind. It's not intended to create pretty pictures for their own sake: instead, it is designed to produce structured drawings for DTP use. Good if you want that.

Draw 4D Pro   £N/A   ☆☆☆☆

This is the latest version of *Draw 4D*, so new that it hasn't been reviewed in *Amiga Format* when this article was written. It can now produce 24-bit images, so it really makes a case for itself as the ideal illustration program for DTP. Wait for our review.

Sculpt-Animate 4D   £130-320   ☆☆☆

This has been the standard for ray-tracing for some years, but has now been somewhat overtaken by the newer programs in this field. Comes in various levels, best of which is *Sculpt-Animate 4D* for animation. Still a very powerful and useful program.

Videoscape 3D   £150   ☆☆

Been used for some of the best 3D animations, especially PD ones. Now outdated and unnecessarily complex, but still does the job. Fast to use, but not real ray-tracing, so less attractive. Needs *Modeller 3D* to be useable, so shop very carefully.

Modeller 3D   £N/A   ☆☆

If you want to use *Videoscape,* you need this. It is just an object modeller, used to create objects to be rendered and animated in Videoscape. It is very surprising that it was never included in the Videoscape package and you should get it thrown in if you can.

Animation Apprentice   £199   ☆☆

This is a system that is still popular in the States, was written by an enthusiast with his own use in mind and has many quirks. It could, in theory, be very powerful: await news of a new version. Only buy this if you are convinced it does something you want.

Caligari   £N/A   ☆☆☆

One of the most talked-about, but least-used programs in the history of the Amiga. It comes as a simple version which can only do 16-colour rendering and a Professional version which costs a fortune. Weird. Look carefully before you buy.

Real 3D   £115-430   ☆☆☆☆☆

This is almost certainly the easiest ray-tracing system to use. The mathematics on which it is based are very clever: instead of every solid object being made up from facets and points, they are literally solids and they appear very smooth in the finished image. Very fast: even useable on a standard A500. Another big plus is that it also works with 24-bit colour.

Forms in Flight 2 £80 ☆☆

Theoretically a unique and very powerful modelling system, using 'surface patches', flat areas bent like the patch on the knee of a pair of jeans. Sadly it was never very easy to use and could not use HAM, so it didn't ever really leave the ground.

C-Light £35 ☆

The very simplest ray-tracing package, but there's a list as long as your arm of things that you might want that it doesn't do. In effect it's now available as PD, bit the manual costs about £30 to get hold of. Not bad to tinker with, but don't expect too much!

Page Render 3D £140 ☆☆

A bizarre 3D modelling system developed around scientific rather than artistic techniques. It works on a CAD system and allows you to make weird and wonderful shapes. If you see what it does and that appeals, you could enjoy it. Needs *Page Flipper 3D* for anims.

DigiWorks 3D £95 ☆☆☆

One of two programs here that are intended to convert bitmap images from a paint package into 3D objects. The most common use, and to be honest the only appropriate one, for this is creating 3D text and logos, which it does well.

Pixel 3D £95 ☆☆☆

The second program that converts bitmap images to 3D objects, and it actually does it very well. The greatest use for this one is pretending that a bitmap is 3D and therefore adding texture-map type effects to programs that don't have it. Good results.

GRAPHICS: 3D FRACTALS

VistaPro £80 ☆☆☆☆☆
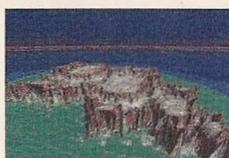
This is one of the most entertaining programs anywhere. It produces 3D landscapes generated from fractals, so the degree of realism possible is highly sophisticated. Models of real landscapes, even some from Mars, are available as model files. Although it can save images as 24-bit IFFs it displays them on the screen as HAM, so you can still use it to the full if you don't have a 24-bit system.

Vista £60 ☆☆☆☆

The older, less sophisticated version of *Vista* is slower (but still quick), less detailed and has less colours: but it's still very good fun indeed. If you can't get the RAM together for *Vista,* try this out. It's both entertaining and useful.

Scene Generator £40 ☆☆☆

If you can find this package for sale anywhere, you might be able to get it for a good price. it's another entertaining and very effective fractal landscape generator, but it lacks *Vista's* landscape modelling system so results are less predictable.

GRAPHICS: DESIGN

Ultradesign £300 ☆☆

This is probably the most professional two-dimensional CAD drawing system on the Amiga. It includes two useful extras: a converter program for taking files from popular CAD systems on computers like the PC: and a multiple-drawing joiner.

Design 3D £80 ☆☆☆

A 16-colour 3D modelling system that just creeps over the boundary into CAD. It is pretty simple to use and the results can be very good indeed. A fully structured system, so objects can be reshaped, rotated and so on. Old, but really very good.

X-CAD Designer   £115   ☆☆☆

This is a two-dimensional drafting program, so it has more in common with the structured drawing systems like *Professional Draw*. Theoretically this could be a good program, but in actual fact not many people have a use for this sort of thing.

X-CAD Professional   £399   ☆☆☆

This is the top-flight version of X-CAD. When you give it this kind of power (and price tag) you're into the territory of taking on the PC-based systems. And if you're in that market, you'll know what you want and should get the product demoed to you.

DTP

Professional Page 2   £199   ☆☆☆☆☆

There are now three serious DTP packages for the Amiga, all of which have their faults and their strong points. You'll see an awful lot of very heavy advertising in this market, but the only way to decide which package to buy is to talk to an expert. We still feel that this is the best: it has a more solid pedigree than the others and isn't left behind for features. But you should compare them.

Pagestream 2.1   £199   ☆☆☆☆

You may have seen a number of ads comparing this with *Professional Page*, but in actual fact there is not a lot to choose between them. Each has certain features the other lacks: you should ideally see it in use before you decide.

Saxon Publisher   £249.95   ☆☆☆☆

This is another of the DTP heavyweights and is an excellent package. Its way of working is distinctly different from the others, so changing over is tricky, but it has a number of excellent features. Look before buying.

PageSetter 2   £99   ☆☆☆☆

Very good cut-down beginner's version of Professional Page which actually uses a lot of the code from the original version of its big brother. Although it cannot output to PostScript devices it's ideal for anyone who wants to start in DTP.

Outline fonts   £130   ☆☆☆

Five disks full of Compugraphic fonts, for DTP work and any other application. Comes with a scaling utility to allow you to set up whatever font sizes you need. Obviously it's pretty expensive, so you have to have a good reason for having quality type.

Gold Disk Type   £35 each   ☆☆☆

A range of rescalable outline-type structured fonts for use in various kinds of Amiga program, but again probably most useful for DTP work. Each package is produced with a different application in mind. Good if you need quality fonts.

VIDEO DIGITISERS

Videon   £249   ☆☆

Can grab images in one go from a full-colour source, but does not grab in real-time: each image capture takes about 30 seconds to appear. A nice option is a display so you can see what you'll get before you grab. Quality good, but overpriced: only buy if cheap.

FrameGrabber 256   £599   ☆☆☆☆

The king of the real-time colour grabbers, gives very good quality and can grab in full colour in real time, so images from moving videotape are possible. Quality is very good: the only real fault is that it's extemely expensive.

Datel Video Digitiser 2 — £90 ☆☆☆☆☆

Only grabs in mono (black-and-white) but don't let that put you off. This is a full real-time grabber, so you can pinch images from a moving video, a TV or anywhere else, for that matter. The real advantage to this relatively cheap system is you don't need a camera and the quality of the results: they are surprisingly clean and free of 'noise', so images don't look messy. Lots of fun!

Colourpic — £399 ☆☆☆☆

A real-time full-colour system which does not give as consistently good results as *FrameGrabber 256* but costs a good deal less. Image quality is certainly good enough and improved by a little toying with the system. A good buy.

Superpic — £499 ☆☆☆☆

A similar system to *Colourpic* and produced by the same firm, JCL. The only real difference is that this more expensive package includes a built-in genlock. This still makes it good value for money and opens up some excellent creative possibilities.

Vidi — £99 ☆☆☆☆

Very simple real-time system that only grabs mono. Will take sequences of shots and save them as an animation, and you can do all kinds of fun things with them like selectively colour-tint frames. Hugely enjoyable little set-up, this.

VidiChrome — £20 ☆☆☆

A software upgrade for *Vidi* that lets it produce full-colour images, but by a three-pass RGB system, not in real time. Still works much quicker than *Digi-View* but results are not quite as clean.

DigiView — £150 ☆☆☆☆☆

One of the oldest digitising systems around, but still has a deserved reputation for excellence. It's method of working is craftsman-like: slow, but you know the results will be excellent! It is a three-pass system that uses filters for the red, green and blue elements. In the right lighting conditions, it can give marvellous results. It can also save files as 21-bit colour, suitable for use with 24-bit programs.

SCANNERS

Datel Geniscan — £170 ☆☆☆

This is the simplest of the hand scanners. It is very simple to use, although the software can be a little bit awkward at times and the instructions are minimal. The software includes a few basic paint facilities. A good start point but not too professional.

Golden Image Hand Scanner — £170 ☆☆☆

This is very nearly an excellent hand scanner, but it has a few problems in the software which make it surprisingly slow. It includes a paint package called Touch Up for you to mess around with images. Look out for the latest version.

PanDAAL Daatascan — £190 ☆☆☆☆

More expensive than the other hand-held scanners, but the extra money is worth spending. The hardware is the best of the bunch and the software is very easy to use, with a few tools for changing an image. Very fine results are easy to achieve.

Professional Scanlab — £200 ☆☆☆☆

Hugely expensive when you account for the fact that this is just the software and interface: the hardware you'll need is a Sharp JX-300 scanner or better, costing several thousand. Results, however, are absolutely marvellous in glorious 24-bit colour.

SOUND SAMPLERS
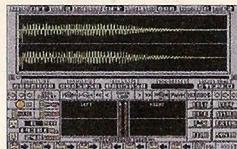
Technosound Turbo £35 ☆☆☆☆☆

For a cheap 'entry level' sampler, this gives excellent results which makes it a great place for beginners to start. The hardware is very effective, but you can upgrade to better software and keep using the hardware. The latest *'Turbo'* version also includes special effects and a simple sequencer for creating tunes. Excellent.

AMAS £100 ☆☆☆

Comes with a built-in MIDI interface which makes it quite good value, but the actual sampling side of things is not the most accessible or effective around. The interface is clunky, but it has a wide range of tools if you have the patience to learn them.

Mastersound £40 ☆☆☆

A cheapish entry-level sampler, this one tends to lack the kind of quality you would want unless you push up the sampling rate and use up huge amounts of memory in the process. Has all the standard edit tools and a sample sequencer. Not easy to use.

Datel Micro Sampler £25 ☆☆

Very cheap, but unfortunately not marvellous value all the same. Distortion is evident on the sound and overall has a muffled quality. All the standard edit tools are present and the Jamming sequencer is entertaining. Reasonable starting point, if cheap.

Trilogic Stereo Sampler Mk2 £40 ☆☆☆☆

The hardware is very good indeed for a cheaper system, getting very close to the more expensive ones, but the software is rudimentary, if easy to use. Comes also with the *AudioMaster III* software, which costs an extra £55 but is well worth it.

Sound Trap III £30 ☆☆☆

A tiny little piece of hardware gives really quite acceptable results, despite looking tacky. The software provided is simple to use but not great: buy it with *AudioMaster II* for £55 or *AudioMaster III* for £85 and it becomes a good proposition.

Perfect Sound 3 £60 ☆☆☆

A smart black box for the hardware, simple software with the ability to use six banks of samples and a good manual make this quite a nice package, but a few quirks let it down a shade. An occasional hum spoils the quality a bit too. But otherwise good.

Datel Pro Sampler Studio 2 £70 ☆☆☆

This one plugs on the expansion slot on the side of an A500, freeing up the parallel port that most samplers use. Despite this and a few other nice ideas, this is let down by a few problems, especially the unfriendly interface. Reasonable.

Sound Master £130 ☆☆☆☆

The complete package to go with the *AudioMaster III* software finally arrives, and very good it is too. The hardware is not quite as full-featured as Audio Engineer, but it includes a built-in microphone, which is a neat idea. Spot on.
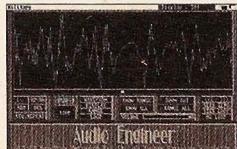
Audio Engineer £199 ☆☆☆☆☆

This is easily the most expensive sampling package around: but as you might expect, the results are far and away the best, This is one for serious music enthusiasts. The hardware is well-constructed and the software is the incomparable *AudioMaster III*. If you're serious about sampling, get this.

Bars and Pipes Professional — £300 ☆☆☆☆

A rather original way of approaching MIDI sequencing, this takes the a simple idea of music as water flowing through the pipes of the MIDI channels. All the tools are presented as graphics and the system is colourful and easy to use. very good. alos available in a smaller, cheaper version.

Tiger Cub — £100 ☆☆☆☆

An excellent entry-level MIDI sequencer developed from MRS. Easy to learn, with features that belie its price which, rather than confusing things actually make it easier. Accurate and versatile recording and editing, plus scoring and music notation. Great.

Dr T's MRS — £50 ☆☆☆

As bundled with the Amiga, most notably in the Class of the 90s educational pack, this is another entry-level sequencing system that allows real-time recording on eight tracks as well as internal voice and sample sequencing. A shade outdated.

Harmoni — £50 ☆☆☆☆

Possibly the cheapest MIDI sequencer you will find, this is a simple song writing system that still has many of the features you would expect on a full-blown sequencer. It can work on four groups of 24 tracks and represents very good value for money.

Music X — £150 ☆☆☆☆☆

Once described in *Amiga Format* as the best music-making software ever to be released for any machine, this is a full-blown professional-standard sequencing system. It is used, to our knowledge, by a number of professional studios and once looked set to become the standard MIDI sequencer. Very good indeed. A new version is set to appear soonish.

Music X Jr — £80 ☆☆☆☆

This is a cut-down version of the above intended for the beginner. The features it lacks are mainly the really specialised ones, but some of the very useful ones are not in either. Nevertheless, it is an excellent package and good for a home musician.

Trax — £99 ☆☆☆☆

Another entry-level sequencer, this one is a plain, no-frills affair in look but actually boasts a whole heap of features only common on more expensive software. Will only work with MIDI, which is a slight drawback, but is a solid intro.

Sequencer One — £90 ☆☆☆☆

Straightforward no-nonsense beginner's sequencer. Has more than enough features for a beginner to get to grips with, runs happily on a standard A500 and uses internal voices as well as MIDI. Can also be bought with *The Hit Kit*, a collection of prepared rhythms, riffs and chord sequences.

Steinberg Pro 24 — £290 ☆☆☆

A full professional MIDI sequencer based on one of the most popular and well-esteemed music packages for the Atari ST. Good editing and graphic controls, a first-rate mixing and effects section but a few let-downs too: you can't hear notes as you edit. Average value for the price.

MIDI Toolkit — £10 ☆☆☆☆

Rather as you might expect, this provides a range of tools for working with MIDI instruments. Basically it's for checking that everything is working OK. If you understand how MIDI works in detail, you'll find it useful.

MUSIC

Mugician — £30 ☆☆☆☆☆
This is one of a few sequencing packages that are actually of more use to programmers, particularly anyone producing games soundtracks. It combines a sample editor and sequencer with internal waveform editing and MIDI voice production. Good value.

TFMX Soundtool — £45 ☆☆☆☆
A system for composing music aimed mainly at games programmers, this is kind of a development of the PD sample sequencer idea. Described in *Amiga Format* as "the most comprehensive and powerful games music creator yet".

Quartet — £50 ☆☆☆
Another sample sequencer for composition or creating game music, complete with stand-alone player module and assembler source code for inclusion in your programs. Theoretically a very powerful system and easy to use, but has a few little niggles.

Aegis Sonix — £45 ☆☆☆☆☆
This is one of the oldest music programs around, but it has to be said it's still very popular and still very good. It's excellent for beginners. Basically it's a sample sequencing system, but it uses proper music notation for composing the music so you can enter tunes straight from sheet music. Compares favourably with PD stuff.

Dr T's Copyist Apprentice — £79.95 ☆☆☆☆
Also available in a Professional version, which costs £300. This is a simple scoring package, which can perform two functions: either you can use it as the musical notation version of a typewriter, or you can transcribe tracks from MIDI files.

Pixound and Hyperchord — £80 and £40 ☆
Two very weird packages for producing music in bizarre ways. In the first you draw patterns on screen and it plays a tune "not unlike a cat let loose on a Bontempi organ" (Maff Evans). The second plays pictures "like a psychopath with a Stylophone". Awful.

WORD PROCESSORS

QuickWrite — £50 ☆☆☆☆
A cut-down no-frills version of *ProWrite* (see below) which cannot use pictures in documents but as a consequence works quickly and excellently on an ordinary unexpanded Amiga 500. Highly recommended if you want simple text processing.

ProWrite 3 — £130 ☆☆☆☆
One of several contenders for best word processor with graphics (very often called word publishers because they're a cross between WP and DTP). Amazingly fast with excellent graphics handling, this is again highly recommended.

Excellence! 2 — £100 ☆☆☆☆
Very close competitor to *ProWrite* in the word publishing field. Not as fast, not as comprehensive in its graphics handling but with an immense thesaurus, good spell checking, a check on the readability of your writing and PostScript printing. Very good.

Wordworth — £130 ☆☆☆☆
Another equal competitor among word publishers. Its main problem is speed and the graphics handling is again not as good as you might wish, but it sets new standards for presentation and ease of use. Very good help system.

Scribble 2 £50 ☆☆

One of the oldest word processors around and still very popular, though in fact it is quite aged and creaky. Not terribly friendly or easy to use but at least quite straightforward. Doesn't really stand up to the competition around today.

Protext 4 £100 ☆☆☆

Has a deserved reputation for austere and almost ruthless efficiency. This is, for many people, the king of Amiga WP, despite a weird interface which takes some getting used to. Above all it is excellent for knocking out words on: a writer's WP system.

Protext 5 £150 ☆☆☆☆

This is the latest version of the word processor that the professionals know and love. Has many improved features and is about to be made available in a new update. This is what we use to write the words for *Amiga Format*: what more need be said?

Word Perfect 4 £N/A ☆☆☆

Very like *Protext* in many ways, this is developed from a popular PC word processor. Again it's no frills, no pictures, heavy-duty word processing. Very good spell checker and thesaurus. Not as popular as *Protext* and if anything less accessible.

Kindwords £50 ☆☆☆

The cheapest word publisher around. In actual fact it might be a lot better off without the graphics handling, because it is very slow indeed. Possibly the best option if you can find it cheap or can't afford the more up-to-date systems.

Pen Pal £130 ☆☆☆☆

Another of the word publishers and again a very good program, though like all the others it has its strengths and weaknesses. its great strength is incredible ease of use: you probably won't even need the manual. A tricky field, this: try to view all the competitors.

HOME OFFICE PACKS

Gold Disk Office £130 ☆☆☆☆☆

For anyone who is starting off with the Amiga and wants a whole range of more serious programs, this has to be a very good bet. it includes the word processor *Transwrite*, which is very clean and efficient: the simple DTP package *PageSetter:* a spreadsheet called *Advantage*, which is possibly the best there is: and a database. With that kind of value, it's an excellent pack.

The Works Platinum Edition £90 ☆☆

A combined package of the word processor *Scribble* and the database program *Organise*. The use of the two together lets you use the mail merge facility from *Scribble* to produce circulars: otherwise, not of great interest.

TEXT EDITORS

Turbo Text £50 ☆☆☆☆

This is one very excellent program. A text editor (basically a word processor designed specifically for use by programmers) that can emulate all kinds of WP and text processing systems and has some very neat extras. The best there is.

Cygnus Ed 2 £90 ☆☆☆☆

Also an excellent text editor, there's very little to choose between this and the aforementioned. The features are very similar, but *Turbo Text* possibly just sneaks it. *Cygnus Ed* is very popular with top Amiga programmers, though…

UTILITIES AND MORE!

Magellan £100 ☆☆☆☆☆
This is a very unique thing on the Amiga. It's an expert system: basically, a very sophisticated database which you teach certain facts and you are later able to interrogate it by asking simple questions, whereupon it will draw conclusions. Fascinating.

Weather Watcher £25 ☆☆☆☆
Another unique idea, but it's obvious why, really. This is a simple program, designed to help you keep a track of weather records. If you need a meteorological database, perhaps for educational use, you'll find it does the job very well indeed.

Distant Suns £60 ☆☆☆☆
The third in a series of extremely unusual programs. This one is an astronomy program that helps you to find the heavenly bodies in the night sky. You set the date, time and your position on the earth and it calculates a star map. Very effective indeed.

Logo and Talking Turtle £N/A ☆☆☆☆
One of the more important educational tools: a programming language made easy for children, designed to give a basic awareness of maths and logic techniques. *Talking Turtle* controls a 'turtle' floor robot. Standard stuff in primary schools.

BBC Emulator 2 £40 ☆☆☆☆
Probably the second most important educational program: it emulates BBC Basic on the Amiga, so that you can use the wealth of BBC educational software written for what is still the standard primary school computer. Works well.

Kidstype £25 ☆☆☆☆☆
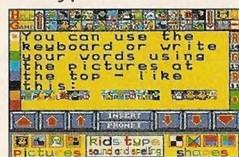
Arguably the third most important educational program on the Amiga, this one is a corker. It is basically a DTP or word processing system for younger children, with big, friendly teacher-style writing instead of type. Excellent for all kinds of creative things, especially storybooks and reports.

GB Route £40 ☆☆☆☆
Another excellent and unique utility. This one is a route-planner: you set a starting point anywhere in the UK and a destination, and it works out your best route giving a road-map as well as how long it will take, how much fuel will cost etc. Very good.

CrossDOS £30 ☆☆☆☆☆
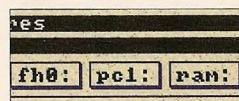
A fine example of how to write an excellent utility. If you ever need to transfer data from an Atari or a PC, simply install this on your Workbench. Call your disk drive pc?: instead of df?: and it will read or write to the PC or Atari disk. Very simple, very effective.

DOS to DOS £45 ☆☆
A good idea, this: but unfortunately CrossDOS had the same idea and does it better. Again this is a utility that lets you transfer files to and from PC disks, but unlike CrossDOS it doesn't run as background: you have to boot it each time you use it.

Mac to DOS £70 ☆☆☆
Another good idea from the same stable as DOS to DOS, and this time - you may have guessed - it lets you move files to and from Mac disks. Only trouble is, you'll need a Mac disk drive costing about £150, but this does a difficult job very well.

Quarterback   £40   ☆☆☆☆

One of several hard-disk back-up programs on the market, and one of the most effective there is. You simply select whatever bits of the hard drive you want to back up and insert the floppies when asked. Will back up to other devices too. Very easy, very good.

Quarterback tools   £65   ☆☆☆☆

Nothing to do with *Quarterback,* really: this is a set of tools for looking after sick disks of both the floppy and hard kinds. It's very easy to use and very effective, getting rid of those annoying "error validating" messages and the like. Extremely useful.

BAD   £40   ☆☆☆

Similar to *Quarterback Tools*, but this is a dedicated disk optimising system intended for use with both floppy and hard disks. Its main use is for curing fragmentation of files which are spread all over a disk, which it does quickly and well, but it cannot rescue deleted files.

Hyperbook   £70   ☆☆☆☆

One of those slightly confusing multimedia things, this is perhaps better described as an 'application generator'. It allows you to design pages of point-and-click information with text and pictures easily accessible to the user. Great if you find a use.

Can Do!   £125   ☆☆☆☆

Another multimedia authoring system, this time more appropriate to whole applications rather than the simple book-like approach. Very sophisticated and user-friendly information systems can be created quite easily with full use of pictures and text. Excellent.

VIDEO

SCALA   £250   ☆☆☆☆☆

Hugely expensive it may be, but SCALA repays the investment in three ways. One, it's incredibly easy to use: two, the results are absolutely marvellous: and three, there's a lot of it, since it comes on about fifteen disks. It basically gives you everything you need to create presentations, from fonts and background pictures to transition effects. It also lets you set up paths depending on user interaction, so it's a cross between a video titler, an animation sequencer and a multimedia presentation producer. And it's good.

Broadcast Titler 2   £199   ☆☆☆☆

One of the best video-titling packages around, it is simply packed to the gills with features. Allows all manner of fades and transitions, has good anti-aliasing to make fonts look less jagged, allows 256 colours on screen: it really pushes!

Home Titler   £40   ☆☆☆

A very straightforward and inexpensive titling package. Only four colours but very easy to use and quick, so if you just want a few captions or titles on your holiday vids it's perfectly adequate.

Pro Titler   £149   ☆☆

A very complete video-titling package, particularly strong on wipe and transition effects but with a few shortcomings too. At the end of the day the faults tend to outweigh the advantages. In such a busy market, this one is a bit weak.

Video Studio   £99   ☆☆☆☆

Possibly one of the most useful pieces of video software on the market, because it combines a whole host of useful little utilities such as a test card and a countdown clock as well as all the titling and captioning bits. Built by video experts.

Title Page   £150   ☆☆☆☆

Another very effective video-titling package. The titles themselves are simple enough, but the range of effects is excellent and the various little programs that make up the system are a powerful set of animation controllers.

TV*Text Professional   £130   ☆☆☆

Yet another powerful titling package, but this one concentrates on the titles more than anything. You type text in and it is then rendered using all kinds of fancy effects. Nothing you couldn't do with *DPaint*, but you'd need skill: this does it all for you.

TV*Show 2   £70   ☆☆☆

Complementary to *TV*Text* in that it provides all the animation and transition effects. It allows you to construct a sequence of pictures or animations with lots of powerful transitions, and even sound. Good even in uses other than video.

DATABASES

Infofile   £50   ☆☆☆☆

A simple and very effective database that allows you to store pictures and sounds as well as text. It is a memory-resident database (though pictures and sound aren't loaded, just file names and paths), which makes it fairly speedy and quite competent.

Prodata   £80   ☆☆☆☆

The database to accompany the famous *Protext* word processor. It's a disk-based system, which slows it down somewhat but means that your data can take up as much space as you wish. All round, a highly business-like and professional affair.

Superbase Personal 2   £100   ☆☆☆☆☆

Probably the standard Amiga database, whether you want to catalogue your record collection or just keep an address book. At the same time as being powerful enough to handle all kinds of business work (it imports files from many PC databases) it's also easy enough for the simplest of use. And, as we said once before, "de facto the leading Amiga database".

Superbase Professional 4   £400   ☆☆☆☆

A huge, powerful and complex affair, really at the sharp end of business software and so a little out of the Amiga's depth, as it were. It's recent, it certainly sets new standards and it's surprisingly accessible for such a big beast: but do you need it?

FINANCIAL

Personal Finance Manager   £30   ☆☆☆☆

Not expensive, and really rather good value: this one provides a small suite of utilities for looking after your domestic finances. It makes it easy to keep a track of your spending and to set yourself a budget. Could also be used by small businesses.

Superplan   £100   ☆☆

One of three spreadsheets (see Gold Disk Office for details of the third, *Advantage*) this is produced by the people who made Superbase. Unfortunately it is not such a success: it's powerful, but very slow and complex to use.

Maxiplan 500   £N/A   ☆☆☆☆

This spreadsheet was included in the Class of the 90s educational pack. It's powerful and fairly easy to use, if a little crash-prone. The charts and graphs it produces are very nice.

GAMES CREATION

AMOS Basic   £50   ☆☆☆☆☆

Unusual in being the only programming language that is in this round-up, but if you want to start out in programming then this Basic language is probably the best way to get exciting stuff fairly quickly. As with any programming it's by no means a doddle to learn, but it does give you all kinds of extras to put the power of the Amiga at your disposal.

AMOS Compiler   £30   ☆☆☆☆

If you do have AMOS, you'll find this invaluable. It compiles your AMOS programs at the click of a button into full machine code, making them much quicker and easily turning them into stand-alone productions that you can pass on to other people.

AMOS 3D   £35   ☆☆☆☆

Again, if you're an AMOS fiend you'll find this irresistible. It's a unique chance to be able to program full 3D games and demos. You create objects using a simple modelling system and then decide what they will do by the judicious use of a set of extra commands.

3D Construction Kit   £50   ☆☆☆☆☆
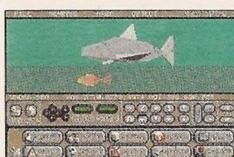
Whether or not you're a fan of Incentive's Freescape 3D adventures, games such as *Total Eclipse* and *Castle Master*, you'll find this an exciting prospect. It's a system that allows you to create your own 3D games. At the heart of it is the ability to shape objects within areas of a 3D world, building whatever you like from them: then, with an intriguing pseudo-programming language you define the interaction of the player with the world. Not completely simple, but very good fun. At the end of the process you can save your game out as a stand-alone for friends to play.

THINGS FOR THE KIDS

MyPaint   £35   ☆☆☆☆

An excellent paint package for children. It includes a number of drawing tools, simple colour fills, great sound effects and a whole heap of pre-drawn line pictures for children to colour in. Kids thoroughly enjoy playing with this one.

The Talking Animator   £35   ☆☆☆

This is a simple page-flipping animation program for younger children: you type in a sentence which is spoken by the computer, then draw a series of frames of an animation. It's a great experience for kids, though more limiting than *MyPaint*.

Fun School series   £25   ☆☆☆☆

This is the most popular series of educational programs on the market. Each pack contains, for the price of a computer game, an assortment of little games intended to encourage reading, writing, comprehension and arithmetic skills. Not at all bad.

The Disney Series   £25   ☆☆☆☆

Only one program per pack here, but as you might expect from Disney the quality is high. Goofy teaches shapes and colours, Mickey teaches numbers and Donald deals with the alphabet. great stuff for younger pre-school children.

—————————————— The End ——————————————
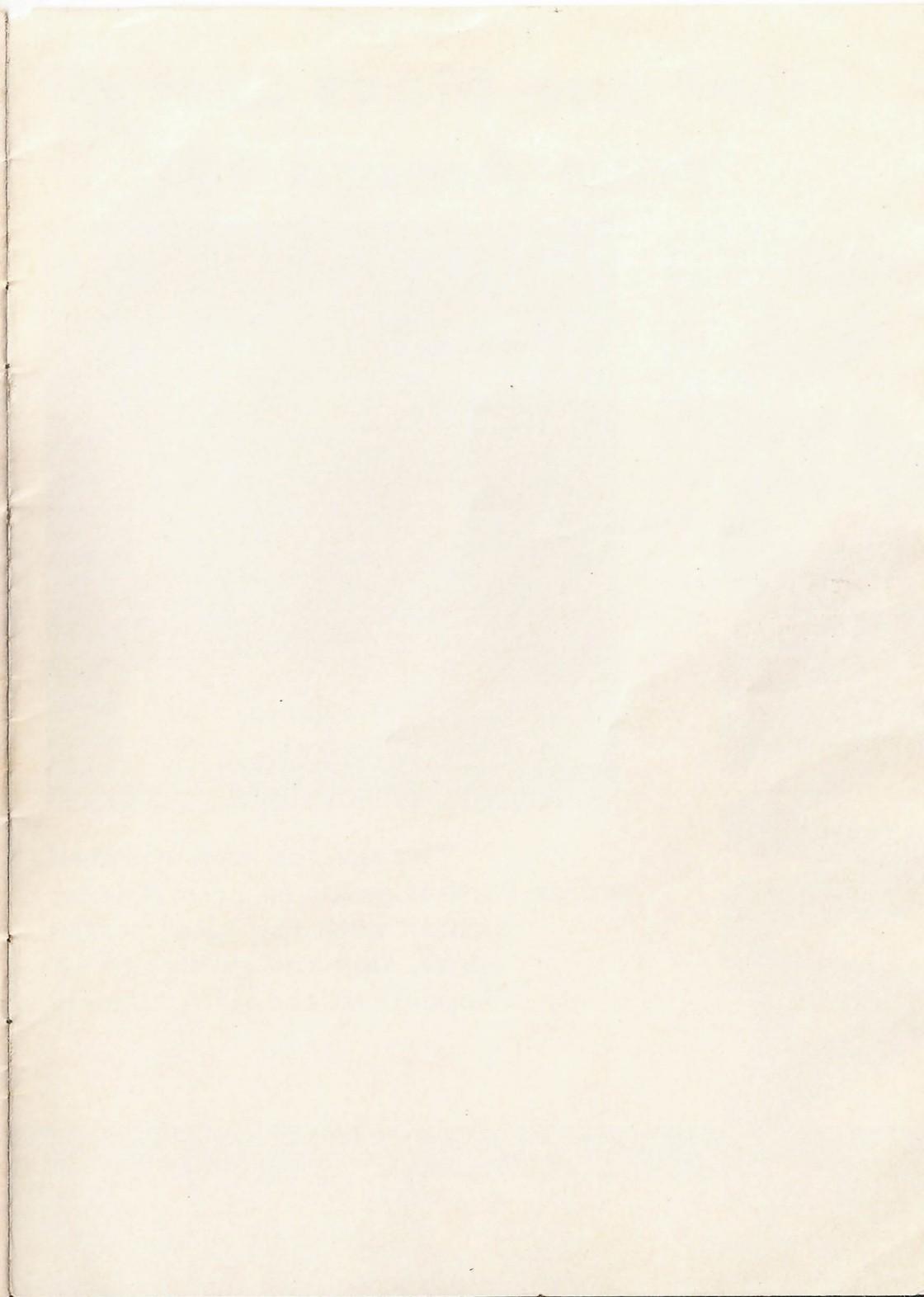
Get the Most Out of Your Amiga 199**2**
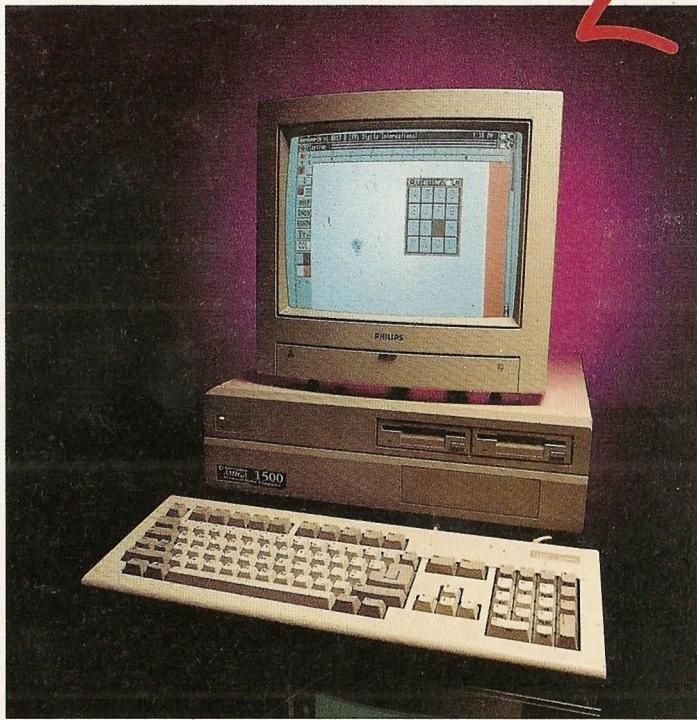
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EDITED BY DAMIEN NOONAN

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